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I. CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE ADDRESSES SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

The Security Council met on 30 June 1998 in response to the request contained in a letter dated 23 June 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group addressed to the President of the Security Council (see S/1998/558). The Council debate addressed the June 21 decision of the Government of Israel to expand the border of Jerusalem and to extend the municipal authority over some Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Over forty delegations addressed the Council meeting (see S/PV.3900 and S/PV.3900 (Resumption)). The President of the Council issued a Presidential Statement on 13 July 1998. The full text of the statement is reproduced in the July 1998 issue of this bulletin.

The Chairman of the Committee, H.E. Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), intervened in the debate as follows:

(interpretation from French)

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the outstanding manner in which you have handled all of the important matters before the Security Council and on the excellent work you have accomplished since the beginning of your term. I should like also to congratulate your predecessor, my brother and friend Mr. Mahugu, Permanent Representative of Kenya, on his timely initiative and on the significant achievements he recorded during his presidency of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting once again today to consider the serious situation that has resulted from the recent actions of the Israeli Government. In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to express the firm condemnation of our Committee of the illegal decision taken by the occupying Power, thereby consecrating, through unacceptable administrative and legal ploys, its authority over territories that do not belong to it.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has consistently drawn the attention of the General Assembly and the Security Council not only to the massive and repeated violations on the part of the occupying Power of the relevant resolutions of the Assembly and the Council, but also to the numerous obstacles that Israel has set up to impede the peace process, which had given us all so much hope.

The question of Jerusalem is at the heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and any unilateral attempt to alter the status of the Holy City, its demographic composition and its geographic and institutional structure represents a grave violation and a threat to the security and stability of the region.

The Government of the occupying Power, through the policy of *fait accompli*, has set about modifying unilaterally and in violation of international law the religious, cultural and historical characteristics as well as the Arabic, Islamic and Christian identity of Jerusalem. It will stop at nothing to achieve its objective of Judaizing Jerusalem. It has resorted to the destruction of houses; the confiscation of land; the illegal extension of settlements, particularly in East Jerusalem; the encircling and isolation of the Holy City by armed settlers; and the confiscation and destruction of the identity papers of Palestinian citizens, who have been expelled from their own city.

Indeed, for more than 18 months, a silent deportation of Palestinians from East Jerusalem has been taking place before our eyes. Hundreds of people are being expelled from their land with the precise objective of preserving a permanent and uncontested majority of Jews in the city. Let us not forget that these expelled Palestinians are not immigrants. They were born in Jerusalem, and their houses and families are in Jerusalem. Their fundamental rights can never be disregarded.

Other provocations include the sealing off of territories, torture, punitive expeditions, administrative detention and the violation of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinians.

The recent adoption of a quota system as part of a plan concerning Jerusalem aims to ensure that by the year 2020 Jews will constitute 70 per cent of the population of Jerusalem and Arabs only 30 per cent. Such unilateral decisions represent not only a provocation for the Palestinian people but also major setbacks in the peace process, which has been on hold for more than a year.

Our Committee strongly denounces that decision, which is a clear violation of international law, of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of the relevant Security Council resolutions. That decision by the Israeli authorities also violates the letter and spirit of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, particularly those adopted during the tenth emergency special session.

The United Nations and several intergovernmental organizations have repeatedly reaffirmed the special status of Jerusalem as well as their position that Israel's occupation is illegal and its actions therefore null and void under international law.

The recent Israeli decision concerning greater Jerusalem represents, in our view, a fresh example of such illegal measures. The establishment and expansion of settlements, the isolation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank, the measures taken against Palestinian residency status and the archaeological excavations are all ongoing sources of concern to the international community.

Our Committee is deeply concerned at the non-respect by the occupying Power of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including 16 resolutions adopted by the Council on the city of Jerusalem. The Committee considers that the decisions taken by the occupying Power regarding the Holy City of Jerusalem are null and void. The Committee therefore joins its voice to those of the States Members of the United Nations in inviting the Israeli government to reconsider its decision and to put an end to the policy of *fait accompli* with respect to the Holy City, whose future must be determined solely within the framework of the final status negotiations.

The Committee launches an urgent appeal to the authorities of the occupying Power to renounce the measures already taken or envisaged to change the geographic, demographic, religious and institutional characteristics of the city of Jerusalem, as well as of the other Arab territories occupied since 1967.

The Committee, through me, would lastly like to call on the Israeli Government to commit itself to the implementation of the agreements already concluded with the Palestinian Authority in order to create the necessary conditions for the resumption of the peace process and the full and effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

It must be recalled that Jerusalem belongs to both the Palestinians and the Israelis, to Muslims, to Christians and to Jews. That city is a mosaic of all cultures, of all religions and of all the peoples that have enriched Jerusalem from time immemorial up

to this day. Jerusalem must remain the city of peace, made up of present and future emotions, dreams and realities. It must be the birthplace of love and coexistence between all peoples and their beliefs.

Finally, allow me to express our deep gratitude to all the members of the Council for having made the decision to convene this open meeting on such an important and delicate matter. In so doing, the Security Council remains loyal to its calling and to the role entrusted to it by the United Nations.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People hopes that at the conclusion of this debate, the Security Council will demonstrate to international public opinion its willingness to contribute to making this sensitive region of the world a zone of peace and cooperation. It hopes, lastly, that the Council will take timely measures, with the support of the sponsors of the peace process, to put an end to the unilateral decisions concerning control over the Holy City of Jerusalem, which, I reiterate, must remain the living symbol of peaceful coexistence between religions and peoples that are different yet complementary.

II. UNITED NATIONS NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, HELD AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS FROM 15 TO 17 JUNE 1998

The North American Non-governmental Organization Symposium on the Question of Palestine on the theme "50 years of dispossession of the Palestinian people" was held at United Nations Headquarters from 15 to 17 June 1998, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 52/49 and 52/50 of 9 December 1997.

The Symposium was attended by 55 non-governmental organizations from Canada and the United States, 12 of them as observers. It was also attended by representatives of 14 Governments, 3 United Nations bodies and agencies and 2 intergovernmental organizations. Nine panellists presented papers on various topics for discussion.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Mr. George Saliba (Malta), Rapporteur; and Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye (Senegal).

At the opening session, a statement was made by Mr. Ravan Farhadi on behalf of the Committee. Statements were also made by Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations; and Mr. David Graybeal, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine.

Three panel discussions were conducted, with the participation of experts. The first panel, entitled "Memory: Remembering the Palestinian history," considered three topics: Historical consequences of the political developments since the adoption of the partition resolution; Memory and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and Implementing the right of self-determination: the peace process and the Palestinian state. Presentations were made by Mr. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Professor of Political Science at Birzeit University; Mr. Don Peretz, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Binghamton University, State University of New

York; Ms. Randa Farah, Research Fellow at the Centre d'études et de recherche sur le Moyen Orient contemporain (CERMOC) in Amman: Mr. Marc Ellis, Research Fellow at Harvard University; and Mr. Baker Abdel Munem, Head of the General Delegation of Palestine in Canada.

The second panel, entitled "Conscience: Strategies for contesting the future", also considered three topics: Upholding international legitimacy; The need for international protection and support of the Palestinian people; and Mobilizing public opinion. Presentations were made by Dr. Ruhama Marton, Chairperson of Physicians for Human Rights; Mr. Michael Lynk, Labor Lawyer and Professor of Law at the University of Ottawa; Mr. Keith Jennings, Director of the African-American Human Rights Foundation in Washington, D.C.; and Ms. Amira Hass, journalist and correspondent for the Israeli newspaper, Ha'aretz.

The third panel, entitled "From memory to conscience - the consequences for NGO work in North America" provided for open discussion with the participation of all the panelists from panels I and II.

Six workshops were held on the following topics: NGO campaign for East Jerusalem; NGO campaign for Palestine refugees; The effects of the closure; Campaign against settlements; Mobilizing North American public opinion; and NGO support for respect of the Fourth Geneva Convention with regard to the question of Palestine.

The participating NGOs elected six members of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine for the period 1998-1999.

A report on the Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

III. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON EXPANDING JERUSALEM BOUNDARIES

The following is a press release issued on 22 June 1998 by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Kofi Annan (see SG/SM/6608):

The Secretary-General deplores the decision of the Government of Israel to expand the boundaries of Jerusalem. He regrets that Israel has taken this unilateral action which infringes upon numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions regarding the status of Jerusalem. The Secretary-General wishes to remind the Government of Israel that the international community has not recognized the earlier imposition by Israel of its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the City of Jerusalem

The Secretary-General urges Israel to rescind this unfortunate decision and to make every effort to restart the peace process. Permanent status negotiations would, among other things, address Jerusalem according to the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 13 September 1993.

IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 23 June 1998, the Secretary-General issued the report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/53/153-E/1998/75) under General Assembly resolution 52/170 of 16 December 1997.

According to the report, which covers the period from June 1997 to May 1998, the international donor community pledged US$ 750 million in grants, loans and equity towards development activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for 1998 and a further $150 million in political risk guarantees for private investment. The United Nations is involved as donor or implementing partner in 102 out of a total number of 658 projects in the Palestinian Development Plan, 1998-2000, of the Palestinian Authority, with a combined value of approximately $224 million.

V. OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (UNSCO) ISSUES REPORT ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator of the Occupied Territories (UNSCO) issued a report dated 15 April 1998 entitled "Report on Economic and Social Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip." The report presents updated data and information from Palestinian, Israeli and international sources on conditions and trends in the macroeconomy, the labour market and in household living levels in 1997 and in relation to 1996. The report also provides an analysis of the economic effects of the March-April and August-September 1997 closures imposed on the West Bank and Gaza Strip and presents new information on the economic branch contributions to GDP, private investment activity and trends in consumer prices in the West Bank and Gaza.

VI. EXCERPTS FROM THE PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT CARDIFF ON 15 AND 16 JUNE 1998

The following are excerpts from the Presidency Conclusions adopted by the European Council at its meeting held at Cardiff on 15 and 16 June 1998:

81. The European Council reviewed the state of the Middle East Peace Process in the light of the visit to the region of the European Council from 17 to 21 April and the President of the Council from 15 to 18 March, and the continuing contacts with the parties by the Presidency and the Special Envoy.

82. The European Council recalls its previous Declarations, particularly to Call for Peace in the Middle East issued in Amsterdam on 16/17 June 1997, and reaffirms the guidelines for an EU policy aimed at facilitating progress and restoring confidence between the parties, issued in Luxembourg on 12/13 December 1997.

83. The European Council expresses its very grave concern at the continuing lack of progress in the peace process and the threat that this poses to the stability and security of the region. It underlines the need for all concerned to show courage and vision in the search for peace, based on the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the principles agreed at Madrid and Oslo, including full implementation of existing commitments under the

Israeli/Palestinian Interim Agreements and the Hebron Protocol.

84. The European Council stresses that the current opportunity for progress on the Palestinian track must not be lost. It reiterates the European Union's strong support for the efforts of the United States to gain the agreement of the parties to a package of ideas which, if accepted, would open the way for implementation of existing agreements and the re-launch of final status talks. In that context, the European Council calls upon Israel to recognize the right of the Palestinians to exercise self-determination, without excluding the option of a State. At the same time, it calls upon the Palestinian people to reaffirm their commitment to the legitimate right of Israel to live within safe, recognized borders.

85. The European Council expresses its grave concern also at the lack of progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks and underlined the need for a continuing effort to reinvigorate them in order to achieve a comprehensive peace based on the principle of land for peace and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. While welcoming Israeli acceptance of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), the European Council calls for the full and unconditional withdrawal of Israel forces from Southern Lebanon.

86. The European Council welcomes the European Union's positive role in the Middle East Peace Process and the efforts of the EU Special Envoy in this respect. This role has included close involvement in the 4/5 May London talks and negotiations on interim economic issues, the conclusion of the Joint Declaration on EU/Palestinian Security Cooperation and intensified exchanges with the parties and the US. It notes recent positive inputs, including the Franco-Egyptian Call for Peace and the proposals made by the Special Envoy, and invited the General Affairs Council to keep them and other possible options under review in the light of developments.

87. The European Council stresses the European Union's desire to continue to do all in its power to support and strengthen the peace process and those striving to carry it forward.

VII. EXPERTS MEET ON THE APPLICATION OF THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION

The following is a text of a press release issued by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland on 11 June 1998:

An experts' meeting on the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention was held at Sarasin Villa, near Geneva, from 9 to 11 June 1998. The meeting, chaired by Switzerland, brought together Israeli and Palestinian representatives in the presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The President of the Swiss Confederation, Flavio Cotti, took the opportunity to meet the delegations and express the support of the Swiss Government for the ongoing efforts with regard to this important issue.

Bearing in mind several Emergency Session Resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Switzerland, depository of the Geneva Conventions, convened this meeting after having conducted extensive consultations with the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions and in particular with States and organizations concerned.

This meeting was the first part of a package of two measures proposed by Switzerland. The second measure, an experts' meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions on problems of the Fourth Geneva Convention (in

general, and in particular in occupied territories), will be proposed in the early days of July. It is expected to take place in early autumn 1998.

Parties participating in the meeting held at Sarasin Villa agreed to hold their discussions in camera and to commonly issue the present press release.

Main issues regarding the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention were raised. Significant conceptual differences emerged concerning the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, its relation with the peace process in the Middle East and the security environment.

The discussions were frank and constructive and were held in a spirit of respect and understanding. Israeli and Palestinian representatives agreed to follow the three principles proposed by Switzerland for meetings on the issue:

- To contribute to real improvements in the respect for the international humanitarian law on the ground;
- To avoid any politicization of international humanitarian law; and
- To support the peace process in the Middle East.

The parties exchanged views on the feasibility of establishing mechanisms and taking concrete measures to implement the Fourth Geneva Convention. All delegations reaffirmed that the Geneva Conventions are a core value of international law and have to be respected.

With a view to conducting the dialogue, the parties agreed to meet again to take into consideration ideas and suggestions that can foster respect of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

VIII. COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE ISRAELI DECISION ON JERUSALEM

At its emergency meeting held on 25 June 1998, the Council of the League of Arab States issued a statement concerning the decision of the Government of Israel to expand the borders of Jerusalem. The text of the statement is reproduced below (see A/52/971-S/1998/579):

At an extraordinary session requested by the States of Palestine and the Sudan, the Council of the League of Arab States considered the serious decision taken by the Israeli Cabinet on 21 June 1998 aimed at expanding the municipal borders of Jerusalem to include the surrounding settlements and extensive areas of West Bank territory. The effect of this decision will be to destroy the landmarks of Jerusalem and alter its status as a holy city for each of the divine religions. It will also strengthen the Israeli hold over the city, erase its Arab identity and change its character and the distribution of its population.

Recalling the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on Jerusalem and the affirmed rights of the Palestinian people, and on the basis of the resolutions of the Arab Summit Conferences, in particular the Cairo Summit Conference of 1996, and the decisions of the Council of the League of Arab States, the Council strongly condemns this decision, which is blatant non-compliance with the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference and all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 252 (1968), which considers the measures taken by Israel in connection with Jerusalem to be invalid and affirms that Jerusalem has special status and that the same applies to it as to the rest of the occupied Arab territories. The decision is also a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention of 1907, and constitutes a hostile act against and a challenge to international

legitimacy. Furthermore, it entails overt racism and the illegal appropriation of land, as well as loss of the rights of Palestinian citizens in the occupied territories.

The Council calls upon the United States of America, as a co-sponsor of the peace process, to compel Israel to comply with the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference. While commending the position of the Russian Federation in this respect, it calls upon the latter, as a co-sponsor of the peace process, and upon the European Union and all concerned parties, to adopt earnest and decisive positions concerning Israeli practices which disregard the rights and feelings of all Muslims and Christians worldwide.

The Council urges the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to convene an emergency session to discuss this serious matter, which will have extremely grave repercussions on the entire peace process and risk destroying it altogether. Moreover, it will place the whole Middle East region in a highly dangerous situation.

The Council also expresses its full and unequivocal support for the decisive position adopted by the State of Palestine and for the steadfastness of the Palestinian Arab people in the occupied Arab territories. It also supports the Palestinian right to oppose both the Israeli occupation and Israel's expansionist ambitions, and the Palestinian people's determination to hold onto land and the Arab identity of Jerusalem.

The Council calls upon the Arab, Islamic and international communities to demonstrate greater solidarity and cohesion in confronting Israeli positions and addressing Israeli provocations. It further calls upon those communities to hold intensive consultations with a view to adopting appropriate positions that will safeguard Arab and national rights, and urges them to provide all forms of support to the steadfast Palestinian people.

Given the clear international consensus that the Israeli plan should be condemned and rejected, the Council expresses its appreciation of the positions adopted by the international community and regional groups, and requests their support for the Arab right to counter unjust Israeli provocations.

The Council, while considering this to be an open session, requests the Secretary- General of the League of Arab States to take the necessary measures and inform the Council of developments in the situation. It further requests him to contact the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Chairman of the Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Committee, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, the Vatican and the members of the Security Council, particularly the permanent members, and to endeavour to ensure that the Arab States appropriately convey to international organizations and the members of the international community the dimensions of this serious Israeli decision and the intense anger which it has caused, the aim being to place pressure on Israel immediately to revoke the policy of the Judaicization of Jerusalem. This should be done in coordination with the ministers for foreign affairs of the Arab States, to whom a report should be submitted at their next meeting.